

**no one could save
me but you**

to make me dream of you -

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eddiesspaghetti (foxwatson)

no one could save me but you by eddiespaghetti (foxwatson)

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Summary:

Ever since Eddie was born, his soulmate mark had been illegible. Sometimes he would stand in front of the mirror and just stare at the signature on his hip, trying to make it out. He would stand there for hours, guessing and second guessing. Around hour four, everything stopped looking like a letter and started looking like thick, black scribbles that no one would ever be able to read. Then Eddie would give up, and take a shower, and not look at his mark again for weeks and weeks, as long as he could avoid it.

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Author's Note:

title from chris isaaks' wicked game which i listened to on repeat while writing this fic, but please don't let that scare you off kljasdf

Ever since Eddie was born, his soulmate mark had been illegible. His mother all but ignored it. She said it was a mess. When he'd been born, and it had been smaller and practically just a solid bar, she always said that she and Eddie's father had doubted it was even a real soul mark. As he'd gotten older, it still never got clearer than two utterly messy squiggles, and it seemed like his mother was determined it would never amount to anything.

Sometimes Eddie would stand in front of the mirror and just stare at the signature on his hip, trying to make it out. He would stand there for hours, guessing and second guessing. For the first hour he'd think maybe the first letter was a B, then he'd think it was an R, then he'd think it was a D. Around hour four, everything stopped looking like a letter and started looking like thick, black scribbles that no one would ever be able to read. Then Eddie would give up, and take a shower, and not look at his mark again for weeks and weeks, as long as he could avoid it.

If there was a person behind his mark - if it wasn't just all some big fucking joke from the universe and he did actually have a soulmate, somehow - Eddie knew their only hope was his own signature, on them. He had practiced his handwriting constantly growing up, day in and day out, and he made his signature as neat and as legible as he possibly could, just in case. He knew the mark was based on a particular signature, and it was already there, but it made him feel better somehow. It was the one hope he had.

When Eddie met Bill and Stan and Richie, when they were kids, none of them could read their soulmate's signatures, so none of them felt left out. None of them had even really understood what a soulmate was - it had barely been explained.

As they got older, they learned to read cursive writing - Stan is the first of them to really master it. Bill's always been the only one of them with his soul mark in a really visible place, right on his arm. It wasn't a name any of them knew yet, then, but Stan helps Bill read it, and it's obvious that Bill would never forget it. *Mike Hanlon* is the name. Apparently. His signature is written in thin, slanted letters that were still fairly small on Bill's arm.

They're still fairly young, around 10, when Richie and Eddie are lying on Eddie's bed and reading comics and Richie turns to him. "Eds-"

"Don't call me that," Eddie says automatically.

"Eddie," Richie says, and it sounds like he's being serious for once.

Eddie closes his Fantastic Four comic and turns to face Richie. "What is it, Rich?"

"Do you, uh. Do you know what your signature says? Your one. Is it... What does it say?"

Eddie blushes, and looks down at his bed. "I don't know. I can't read it. Neither can my mom. Neither can Stan. I tried to get him to help. Nobody can read it. I'm not even sure it's... a name. Or anything. Sometimes I think it might be a fake one or something."

"Oh. Can that happen?"

Eddie shakes his head, and shrugs, and Richie doesn't say anything else. Part of Eddie wants to ask what Richie's says, but he bites his tongue instead, so hard it hurts. He doesn't want to know. Even then, he was scared to know.

They all get older. They meet Ben, who's met Bev, and the two of them join the group. They're not really together yet, but they've identified their own signatures on each other, and they sit close and whisper and Ben blushes every time Bev gets close, and Eddie can barely stand to look at them sometimes, and then he hates himself for it.

He loves them both, they're his friends, and he found himself caring about them quickly. He's glad they're happy - but he's also getting

closer and closer to thinking he doesn't have a soulmate. It hurts. It makes him angry. He doesn't like the way jealousy rises up in his chest, sticks in his throat, but he can't seem to stop it.

Sometimes he scratches at the mark on his hip like that'll make it change or go away, scratches until the skin around it is red and angry and it stings, and then he's glad again that it's hidden easily under his clothes.

They're all 16 when they meet Mike. The great, mythical, Mike Hanlon. He's good and strong and he smiles at Bill and his whole face lights up. They're perfect for each other.

Eddie really can't be around them. He loves Mike, too, loves when he can sit among all seven of them and pretend he's normal and they're all only friends and that they all love each other equally as much - but he knows it isn't true.

He still hangs out with Richie, alone, because he feels comfortable with Richie. Even Stan has a name he can read, he knows who his soulmate is, too, he just hasn't met him yet. Richie never talks about that stuff.

One day they're at the quarry and Eddie finally forces himself to ask. "Rich. What's your mark say? Your signature?"

Richie drops the rock he was holding and turns his head so fast his glasses nearly fall off. He pushes them back up. "Uh. Why, Eds?"

"Just. You asked me about mine like a million years ago, I never asked about yours. Is there something wrong with yours too?"

"It, uh. I mean. I can read it."

"Oh. What's it say?"

Richie picks up another rock, turns to look down at the water again. "...Amy Thompson."

"Like from school?"

"No, not like - I mean we don't match. She's got somebody else's

name so that's. I mean either it's another Amy Thompson, cause it's like a name, right, or we're just. Mismatched somehow."

"Can that... Can that happen?" Eddie asks, quietly.

Richie shrugs. "I don't know. It's possible, isn't it?"

"Did you have her sign her name to check?"

Richie tosses the rock, then turns around. "I'm not even sure I believe in soulmates, Eds. I mean if yours is all fucked up and people can get matched wrong, and then there's. There's too many people around here who shouldn't fucking be together or got hurt trying to be with somebody just because some shitty birthmark, basically, says they should, it's all just bullshit."

Eddie blinks at him. "What about Bill and Mike? Or Ben and Bev?"

Scoffing, Richie kicks at the dirt, looks down at his own dirty Vans. "Fucking good for them, I guess."

The tone in Richie's voice is familiar because Eddie's felt it, too. Feels it, all the time. He stands up and walks over, nudging at Richie's shoulder. "Rich..." He says quietly. He pulls Richie towards him, and Richie actually comes.

Richie's arms go around Eddie's waist, and Eddie's go around Richie's shoulders, and Richie puts his face against Eddie's neck, and Eddie even slides a hand into Richie's curls. They stand there, in the chill, holding each other. It's almost enough. Not quite, but almost.

He and Richie have always gravitated towards each other, for whatever reason. Now they spend more time together than ever. With both of them having given up hope, they find comfort in each other. It's not the same - and Eddie isn't sure if the others think it is or not - but he and Richie are both able to go back to spending more time with the group. They lean against each other, and Eddie finds his jealousy eases a little. He's not alone in his hopeless mess - he and Richie are both alone, and that's completely different.

Now when the seven of them hang out, it's BillandMike and BenandBev and Stan- and then Richie and Eddie, not quite all one

word, but still set apart together somehow.

They watch movies at Bill's house, and Stan takes the only single chair. The rest of them curl up on the floor in pairs - or Richie and Eddie tend to take the couch, Richie sprawled over it with his head in Eddie's lap. Sometimes he reaches up and flicks at the ends of Eddie's hair, where it's started to curl up.

"You should keep letting your hair grow out, Eds. It's cute."

"What, so we can match? How ridiculous would that be?"

Richie hums, looking up at him. "No, your hair is lighter than mine. And it's softer. It's different."

"True, I like yours better." Eddie ruffles both of his hands through Richie's curls, mussing them up completely, and Richie laughs and grabs at his wrists.

"God, stop it, dipshit."

Eddie grins down at him. His hands slide down to Richie's face. "Yeah? Why should I?"

"Got a hot date with your mom tonight, that's why," Richie says with a wink, and Eddie scoffs and smacks the back of his head, lightly.

Interactions like this are commonplace now, so none of the other losers really react, focused on the movie or each other or generally just ignoring Richie and Eddie. Stan smirks at them a little, Bill seems to be smiling, too, but Eddie doesn't really mind. He's warm, and he can go back to running his fingers through Richie's soft curls, and surrounded by his friends and with Richie so close, he feels whole. It doesn't feel like there's some part of him missing.

Things stay like that for a year or so. He and Richie are close, and comfortable, but not romantic in the traditional sense. There's no kissing, except the occasional kiss on the cheek, and there's definitely no sex, but other than that he and Richie are draped all over each other, touching constantly more often than not.

Then everything has to go to hell - because of course it does.

He and Richie have decided to apply to schools together, so they're filling out applications in Eddie's room, alone. They help each other figure out what to put, and Eddie even fills out some of Richie's forms for him, because his handwriting is shit. Except obviously Eddie can't sign it for Richie.

"Here, you just need to sign it down there at the bottom."

"Eds, your handwriting is so much nicer than mine, you know mine's shit, can't you just do it?"

"Rich, you're basically signing, like, a contract, that's so illegal. There's no way I'm signing your name for you. Just sign it."

Richie huffs out a sigh and scribbles a little signature on the line.

Only Eddie would know that little signature even if he was brain dead, he would practically recognize it from feel, with his eyes closed. He would know the shapes from miles away. For a second, he thinks maybe his heart stops.

"Richie-" he chokes out, but he is nearly choking, definitely panicking, and Richie's immediately crawling over to put his hands on Eddie's face.

"Eddie, baby, what is it? Come on, breathe. God, my signature's not that bad, is it?"

Somehow, even near tears and halfway into a panic attack, Eddie laughs. It's wheezy and pathetic, but he gets it out.

Then, because it's Richie, and only Richie could do that - make him laugh at a time like this, get him to start calming down, touch his face and call him baby and just leave Eddie leaning into the touch - Eddie starts freaking out all over again.

Eddie knows what Richie's signature said. Richie told him. Amy Thompson, but not like Amy Thompson at school. Even if Richie doesn't believe, even if he thinks the whole thing is bullshit, Eddie's signature isn't the one on Richie's skin.

There's finally a person behind the mark on Eddie's skin, proof that it

isn't just some cruel joke - except that it is. Eddie's got the signature of the person he loves most in the world right on his hip, but it also turns out that Richie was right - mismatches can happen. And they have.

He spends the rest of the time he takes to calm down his breathing thinking of what he's going to tell Richie. He could tell him the truth, but he refuses to ruin what they've got - it's good. It's the closest Eddie is ever going to get to his soulmate. He won't fuck that up.

His breathing calms down, and Richie asks again, "Eds, what is it?"

Eddie's breathing is calmer, he can speak, and he's got his excuse all settled. "I just. It sort of. Became real? When you signed it, I just realized that we're doing this, the whole. College thing and we're gonna go off, and like, God what if you get in somewhere you really wanna go and they don't accept me, then what are we gonna do?"

Richie sighs at him, seemingly partly with relief, and smiles softly. "Eds. Don't be silly. We're gonna go somewhere we both get in - we picked a whole fucking. List of schools. I'm not gonna just run off without you. What would I do without my little Eddie Spaghetti?" He says that, and he starts pressing smacking kisses all over Eddie's face, and Eddie starts to laugh and blush at the same time, overwhelmed by the silliness of it but also by just how sweet and affectionate the gesture really is.

Once Richie's winded down, he presses one last kiss against Eddie's temple, and then lays down on top of Eddie, covering him like a blanket. Eddie puts one hand in Richie's hair, and another just resting on his back.

"I mean it, Eds," Richie says quietly. "I'm not going anywhere without you."

It feels a little like someone's twisting a knife in Eddie's chest, but he smiles still. "You'd better not."

The realization that Richie is his soulmate - but that he's also not Richie's - doesn't change as much as Eddie feels like it should. It changes the way he sees Richie, maybe, a little - but Eddie also has

the sneaking suspicion that feeling has always been there, and he just hadn't been ready to acknowledge it.

Now, kissing Richie is most of what he thinks about. If he wakes up next to Richie - and he nearly always does - he spends some time watching him sleep, looking at the bridge of his nose, the areas just below his eyes, where Richie's freckles are prominent and where his glasses are normally in the way. Once, Eddie presses a kiss there, just a gentle one at Richie's cheekbone, and Richie just wakes up and smiles at him - and Eddie nearly dies, just overwhelmed by it all, but it turns out he only *feels* like he was having a heart attack.

Other times he just sits and watches Richie talk - he's always listened, but now sometimes he gets distracted from listening to Richie talk by watching his lips shape around the words. If he gets too dazed, Richie will poke him or nudge him or even deliberately brush over a ticklish spot to pull Eddie back into the conversation.

It's pure chance, the day it happens. The fact that it happens just three weeks before graduation, that it happens after they've known each other for over ten years, that it happens when it does and not somehow ages and ages before -well Eddie can't know the reason.

But finally, one morning, Eddie wakes up, and he and Richie have kicked off all the sheets in the night. Richie's pajama bottoms have ridden down, and his shirt has ridden up, and the skin on his hip is actually visible.

Eddie knows looking will only hurt, but he does it anyways.

Only instead of any girl's signature, what he finds there is his own neat, practiced signed name. *Eddie Kasprak*.

Immediately, it feels like Eddie's lungs are going to collapse. He tries to calm down, but he wakes up Richie in the process - only this time, when Richie gets that concerned look in his eyes, and reaches over, Eddie shoves him away, breathing on his own - or trying to.

He starts to gesture, and Richie looks down himself and seems to realize what's happened. He goes completely pale, and pulls his shirt down, covering up Eddie's name just as quickly as Eddie had

accidentally first read it, only minutes ago.

“Eds. Eddie. Look, it’s not - I mean I can’t change the name I’ve got, I can’t change what’s on here, If I could-”

Eddie can’t hear the end of that sentence, can’t imagine why Richie would have lied, so still hyperventilating, he goes into the bathroom and locks himself in, going straight to his knees on the floor because it feels like his heart just rose up into his throat, just imagining that Richie might have finished that sentence *If I could I would*.

He hears Richie outside, smacking his open hands against the door. “Eddie, don’t. Please don’t.”

“You lied, why would you lie? Why’d you lie?” He finally forces out - but it’s as thick in his throat and as breathless with panic as Eddie has ever managed in his life.

“I didn’t... Eddie I don’t wanna do this through a fucking door.”

Eddie closes his eyes, and feels his head thump back against the door. The linoleum in the bathroom is cold on his legs, too hard to sit on comfortably. There’s nowhere he’d rather be than back in bed with Richie, warm and comfortable and almost happy.

Except Richie knew. Richie’s known this whole time, since he could read the writing, and he never told Eddie. Richie’s known since they were teenagers, and he knew about Eddie’s name in neat handwriting on his hip, and he said *it’s all just bullshit*. Eddie thinks about the fact that Richie’s never kissed him on the mouth, and how apparently it’s all just been intentional.

“I don’t want to do this at all. Can you leave, please?”

“Eds...”

“Don’t call me that. Just. Leave, Richie.”

He hears footsteps, then, and there’s a finality in them. Sitting on the bathroom floor, he starts to cry.

Except the footsteps come back, after just a few minutes, like Richie

only got downstairs before he changed his mind. “Eddie. Please just let me explain. Don’t... Can you just open the door? Don’t make me leave like this.”

“...Give me a minute.”

Eddie can’t make it look like he wasn’t crying, but he wipes his tears and stands up. He tries to pull himself up to his full height, to seem more put together than he really is, but it can only do so much when Richie’s still taller than him. He’s hoping that at least his posture will make him seem more composed than he feels, because he feels like the last stitch holding him together just finally fell out and like he’s going to collapse into shattered pieces at any moment. He opens the door.

Richie looks up at him and then back down at the floor.

“I. I knew your mark was... inconclusive, or what the fuck ever. You told me. When we were kids. So when I knew mine was you, but yours didn’t have to be me, I figured you had an out. I wanted to let you have it. Only then you asked me, and I didn’t know how to tell you that everything just... was shit, you know, so I sort of lied. Not completely, because I let you think I was mismatched, but I didn’t want you to feel bad. I just figured with yours all fucked and mine matched to you with no way to-”

“Mine’s not fucked up, you idiot.”

Richie blinked at him. “What? What does that mean?”

“It means I.... It means I figured it out. A while ago. While we were still applying for colleges. Before we’d got our stuff back.”

“...Who is it?” Richie looks anxious, and annoyed, and Eddie loves him but he’s also completely fed up.

“Just... look at it.” Eddie pulls up his own shirt, pushes down his pyjama shorts, and watches as the realization dawns on Richie’s face.

“That’s why you had a panic attack when we were applying for college.”

“Yeah. Because that’s the only thing that was fucked up. Was your fucking... shitty handwriting.”

“Then why did you lie?”

Eddie frowns at Richie. “You told me yours was Amy Thompson! I thought we were-” His voice gets stuck in his throat for a moment. “After all that shit you said, I thought you were right, I thought mine was fucked up and we were mismatched, because that would be about my fucking luck, after all the trouble it’s given me. So I didn’t say anything or do anything because there was supposed to be some girl out there you were matched to, probably, you were just... Not gonna find her for a while or maybe didn’t want to, but I wasn’t going to take the option away from you like that.” He pauses, thinking for a second he’s done, but then he remembers why he’d really been upset in the first place. “But you! You... Rich, you knew the whole time that I was yours, and whatever your stupid reasons, you knew mine was just unreadable, but I. I used to practice my handwriting so it would be neat, I used to sign everything for practice, you used to watch me do it. I thought the only way, that it... I was doing it so they. You’d. Whoever could... Read it and know. But you... And then you haven’t...” He trails off. He can’t say any of the things he wants to do - he’s too scared. This is all bad enough without him making it worse.

“I haven’t what?”

“You just never said anything. And you could have. I don’t know.”

Richie sighs. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I lied, Eds. Do you still want me to go?”

The fact that Richie knows they’re matched and he’s just offering to go brings the pain back to Eddie’s chest. “Do you want to go?” he asks.

“That’s really up to you, it’s your house.”

It’s obvious that Richie doesn’t really seem to want to stay - he hasn’t reached out to touch Eddie at all - but Eddie still can’t be the one to tell him to go. He just shakes his head. “You’re the one that thinks all

this stuff is just bullshit - I guess that's up to you."

There's a moment of quiet, and Eddie walks past Richie, carefully not touching him, and goes back to his room. Even his skin seems to ache at this point. There's just pain, all over him. Once he's in his own room, he can't sit down on the bed - because it'll still be warm, and smell like Richie. He just stands, in the middle of everything, and wraps his own arms around himself.

"I don't really know that I'd say it's bullshit," Richie says from the door.

Eddie's surprised, and he turns back to face him.

"I mean. There's something here, right? And like you said last time, Mike and Bill are happy, Ben and Bev are happy, and I'm happy for them, I'm just. I'm jealous, too," Richie continues.

"Yeah. I know. I was, too," Eddie replies.

"You *were*?"

"Well before we... I mean before there were two of us, you know? Ever since we talked that day and things were... A little different, you know, I felt better. I guess with things... You know since this is... We're... Whatever, that makes sense. Right?" Eddie can't say that they're soulmates, or a match, or whatever they might be, because he's terrified that Richie won't agree.

"You mean since we match?"

Eddie looks down at the ground, shrugs. "Yeah. That."

There's a pause. "Do you think... Do you think maybe there can be platonic soulmates?"

It's the thing Eddie had feared most, but also thought Richie might say. He feels his shoulders curl in a little. "I don't know. It's possible. I don't... know enough about this, Rich," he says in a small voice.

"Eds, I can't figure out what you want me to do."

Eddie feels a little of his anger return. How the hell is he supposed to tell Richie what he wants when Richie is so reluctant about everything, asking about platonic soulmates and standing on the other side of the fucking room? "You've never kissed me," Eddie blurts out, and then he immediately bites his own lip so hard it hurts, like it can stop the words that already escaped.

"I- What?"

"You've never... You've known this whole time that I was yours, and we've been doing whatever it is we're doing for like a year and a half, and I'm pretty sure everyone else thinks we're already matched or whatever but you've never... done anything like that or even tried. I mean there's like kisses on the cheek and stuff and that one time after I freaked out about your signature, but... I don't know why you're asking me about staying platonic when it's pretty obvious what you wanna do, I'm not gonna ask you to do stuff just to make an idiot out of myself. You won't even touch me right now. I'll be platonic, I'll do whatever you want, just. Don't. Don't let it mean I have to go to college alone, or that everything's fucked up."

"You think I don't wanna kiss you?"

Eddie can't bring himself to look up. Richie still hasn't moved, and now Eddie knows he's fucked everything up, so he just shrugs a little. The answer is that he *knows* Richie doesn't want to kiss him, but he's determined to stay shut up.

"Eddie. Eds. C'mere."

He looks up, and Richie puts a hand on his shoulder, and that's all it takes before he's wrapped his arms around Richie's waist like he's going to disappear, holding him more tightly than he really should, probably. Richie holds him just as tightly, though, and Eddie melts against him, finally able to relax, finally able to breathe again. "I'm sorry," he mutters against Richie's shoulder.

"I'm sorry, too, Eds. I mean. Mostly I'm sorry about my fucking shit handwriting, but I'm sorry about lying, too, it was - that was fucking stupid. I'm sorry."

Eddie lifts his head up and blinks at Richie, who close up is clearly as upset as Eddie is. Eddie reaches up and pushes his curls off his face with one hand. "It doesn't really matter, Rich, I just. I freaked out because I was scared about how you'd react, as long as... As long as we're okay, it doesn't matter."

"Are we okay?" Richie asks, blatantly nervous. His eyes are big and worried behind his glasses, and Eddie still feels a little of that, but it shrinks and shrinks while Richie's holding him.

"Yeah, Rich. Of course we are." Eddie leans up to kiss Richie on the cheek, and then moves back again, but Richie catches him with a hand on the back of his neck.

They're so close their noses are still brushing. "Eds..." Richie says quietly, and then he presses his lips against Eddie's, just briefly.

The last of Eddie's uncertainty fades as he blinks it away. "Oh," he whispers. Then he leans up and presses his lips against Richie's, kissing him back, but this time the kiss turns desperate with obvious want.

They only barely know what they're doing, but Eddie presses as close as he can and licks into Richie's mouth, and bites at his lower lip, because now he finally, finally can.

When they pull apart, Richie's eyes are wide and dark, his pupils dilated. His lips are a little swollen, and Eddie can't help leaning in for one last kiss, a gentler, lingering one against Richie's still parted lips.

"So... not platonic, then," Richie says as Eddie pulls away again.

Eddie laughs, helplessly, and leans forward with it so his cheek brushes against Richie's and then he's pressed his nose and face right at Richie's jaw, staying as close as he can. "Yeah, no. Not exactly."

"Yeah, good. That's good with me. I can handle that."

Pulling back, Eddie looks up at him again, and they both smile. "I love you," Eddie says, unable to hold it back. Only they say that all the time, so he pauses, revises his statement. "I mean. I'm in love

with you. I have been for... a while. Maybe the whole time.”

“Yeah, well, we’re soulmates, aren’t we? Makes sense that you can’t resist me.”

“Richie,” Eddie says with annoyance - but he’s still smiling, too. He pokes Richie in the side for it, still.

“Alright. I love you, too, obviously, I’m also in love with you, you’re fucking perfect and it’s ridiculous that somehow you got stuck with me but I’m also fucking delighted. Better?”

Eddie kisses Richie again. He can’t seem to stop. “No, not exactly, because you’re being ridiculous, but it is better, so I’ll take it. I’m not stuck with you. I love you. You’re my soulmate. Asshole.”

“See? You know I’m an asshole.”

“Stop it!” Eddie says, but he’s grinning, because Richie is, too. Still, he shoves Richie and they both topple onto the bed, and Eddie leans in and presses kisses all over Richie’s face, copying what Richie did to him the day Eddie had first seen his signature.

Richie laughs, too, and grabs his face and eventually pulls Eddie into a real kiss to make him stop. When they pull apart from that, they just lie there, Eddie on top of Richie, Richie looking up into his eyes, and they stare.

“You’re really stuck with me now. For college, and everything else,” Richie says.

“Yeah, good. You’re not getting rid of me either. Not anymore.”

Eddie finally lays down, fully on top of Richie, and Richie puts his arms around Eddie’s waist to keep him there, and they’re Richie and Eddie after all.

Author's Note:

okay so klajsdf ta da?? i actually prefer this one to my other one but my best friend/idea beta said it was much sadder so shows what i know klsdjf let me

know what you thought either way!! i have another fic i'm working on that i'm planning to post next that'll be another oneshot, then i have another big chaptered fic i'm working on that i'm hoping to start posting either this weekend or early next week??? anyways. thanks for reading as always!!! to get back to doing this, you can find me on tumblr @eddykaspbraks if that kind of thing suits your fancy, and you can give me writing prompts there if you'd like!!